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AGUINALDO'S CASE AGAINST THE UNITED STATES.*

BY A FILIPINO.

A SHORT time ago, the American people were painfully shocked into a sense of the truth as to the condition of affairs in the Philippine Islands, by the protests of the newspaper correspondents that Gen. Otis was deliberately falsifying the reports of the Philippine campaign to suit public vanity. This by means of a rigid censorship, instituted by his "sovereign" commands, he has done in the most efficacious manner, and the American people awoke the other day, not, like the English poet Byron, to find themselves famous, but to realize the fact that they have been miserably duped. The resignation or demission of Secretary Alger was a necessary consequence of this revelation.

We Filipinos have all along believed that if the American nation at large knew exactly, as we do, what is daily happening in the Philippine Islands, they would rise *en masse*, and demand that this barbaric war should stop. There are other methods of securing sovereignty—the true and lasting sovereignty that has its foundation in the hearts of the people. Has not the greatest of English poets said:

" Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood ? "

And, did America recognize this fact, she would cease to be the laughing stock of other civilized nations, as she became when she abandoned her traditions and set up a double standard of government—government by consent in America, government by force in the Philippine Islands.

*This article was written by an authorized personal representative of Aguinaldo. For diplomatic reasons he considers it unwise to attach his signature.—EDITOR N. A. R.

"Coming events cast their shadows before." Let us look at the situation exactly as it is, as we know it to be, and let the American people no longer deceive themselves or be deceived by others.

Politically speaking, we know that we are simply regarded as the means to an end. For the time being, we are crushed under the wheels of the modern political Juggernaut, but its wheels are not broad enough to crush us all. Perfidious Albion is the prime mover in this dastardly business—she at one side of the lever, America at the other, and the fulcrum in the Philippines. England has set her heart on the Anglo-American alliance. She is using America as a cat's-paw. What she cannot obtain by force, she intends to secure by stratagem. Unknown to the great majority of the American people, she has taken the American government into her confidence, and shown it "the glorious possibilities of the East." The temptation has proved too strong. Now, in this, England is playing a double game, on the principle of "heads I win, tails you lose." If America should win, all is well; England has her ally safely installed in the East, ready at her beck and call to oppose, hand in hand with her, the other powers in the dismemberment of the Orient. If America loses, she will be all the more solicitous to join in the Anglo-American alliance. The other powers stand by and see this political combination effected, while their plenipotentiaries gravely discuss, at the Hague, the theoretical aspects of universal peace, and are deaf to the wail of the widows and the orphans, and to the cry of an oppressed race struggling to be free. Such is "man's inhumanity to man."

You have been deceived all along the line. You have been greatly deceived in the personality of my countrymen. You went to the Philippines under the impression that their inhabitants were ignorant savages, whom Spain had kept in subjection at the bayonet's point. The Filipinos have been described in serious American journals as akin to the hordes of the Khalifa; and the idea has prevailed that it required only some unknown American Kitchener to march triumphantly from north to south to make the military occupation complete. We have been represented by your popular press as if we were Africans or Mohawk Indians. We smile, and deplore the want of ethnological knowledge on the part of our literary friends. We are none of these. We are

simply Filipinos. You know us now in part: you will know us better, I hope, by and by.

Some clear-headed men in the United States Senate knew the facts; but, alas, genius and correct thinking are ever in the minority.

I will not deny that there are savages in the Philippine Islands, if you designate by that name those who lead a nomad life, who do not pay tribute or acknowledge sovereignty to any one save their chief. For, let it be remembered, Spain held these islands for three hundred years, but never conquered more than one-quarter of them, and that only superficially and chiefly by means of priest-craft. The Spaniards never professed to derive their just powers from the consent of those whom they attempted to govern. What they took by force, they lost by force at our hands; and you deceived yourselves when you bought a revolution for twenty million dollars, and entangled yourselves in international politics. "*Non decipimur specie recti.*" You imagined you had bought the Philippines and the Filipinos for this mess of pottage. Your imperialism led you, blind-fold, to purchase "sovereignty" from a third party who had no title to give you—a confidence trick, certainly, very transparent; a bad bargain, and one we have had sufficient perspicuity and education to see through.

In the struggle for liberty which we have ever waged, the education of the masses has been slow; but we are not, on that account, an uneducated people, as our records show. Your Senators, even, admit that our political documents are worthy of a place in the archives of any civilized nation. It is the fittest and the best of our race who have survived the vile oppression of the Spanish Government, on the one hand, and of their priests on the other; and, had it not been for their tyrannous "sovereignty" and their execrable colonial methods, we would have been, ere this time, a power in the East, as our neighbors, the Japanese, have become by their industry and their modern educational methods.

You repeat constantly the dictum that we cannot govern ourselves. Macaulay long ago exposed the fallacy of this statement as regards colonies in general. With equal reason, you might have said the same thing some fifty or sixty years ago of Japan; and, little over a hundred years ago, it was extremely questionable, when you, also, were rebels against the English Government,

if you could govern yourselves. You obtained the opportunity, thanks to political combinations and generous assistance at the critical moment. You passed with credit through the trying period when you had to make a beginning of governing yourselves, and you eventually succeeded in establishing a government on a republican basis, which, théoretically, is as good a system of government as needs be, as it fulfils the just ideals and aspirations of the human race.

Now, the moral of all this obviously is: Give us the chance; treat us exactly as you demanded to be treated at the hands of England, when you rebelled against her autocratic methods. Deal only with facts in a rational and consistent way. Leave empiricism alone, and address yourselves seriously to the work of seeking the solution that shall be honorable to both parties. We know all the wire-pullers who are at work. We can tell you far more than you know; for we know our country and our countrymen, their past history, and what is necessary for their future good.

Now, here is an unique spectacle—the Filipinos fighting for liberty, the American people fighting them to give them liberty. The two peoples are fighting on parallel lines for the same object. We know that parallel lines never meet. Let us look back to discover the point at which the lines separated and the causes of the separation, so that we may estimate the possibility of one or the other or both being turned inwards so that they shall meet again.

You declared war with Spain for the sake of Humanity. You announced to the world that your programme was to set Cuba free, in conformity with your constitutional principles. One of your ablest officials gave it as his opinion that the Filipinos were far more competent to govern themselves than the Cuban people were.

You entered into an alliance with our chiefs at Hong Kong and at Singapore, and you promised us your aid and protection in our attempt to form a government on the principles and after the model of the government of the United States. Thereupon you sent a powerful fleet to Manila and demolished the old Spanish hulks, striking terror into the hearts of the Spanish garrison in Manila. In combination with our forces, you compelled Spain to surrender, and you proclaimed that you held the city, port and bay of Manila until such time as you should deter-

mine what you meant by the word "control," as applied to the rest of the islands. By some mysterious process, heretofore unknown to civilized nations, you resolved "control" into "sovereignty," on the pretense that what is paid for is "possession," no matter what the quality of the title may be.

Let us go into details. You went to Manila under a distinct understanding with us, fully recognized by Admiral Dewey, that your object and ours was a common one. We were your accepted allies; we assisted you at all points. We besieged Manila, and we prevented the Spaniards from leaving the fortified town. We captured all the provinces of Luzon. We received arms from you. Our chiefs were in constant touch with your naval authorities. Your consuls vied with each other in their efforts to arrange matters according to the promise made to us by your officials. We hailed you as the long-prayed-for Messiah.

Joy abounded in every heart, and all went well, with Admiral George Dewey as our guide and friend, until the arrival of General Merritt. Either on his own responsibility, or by orders from the Government at Washington, this general substituted his policy for that of Admiral Dewey, commencing by ignoring all promises that had been made and ending by ignoring the Philippine people, their personality and rights, and treating them as a common enemy.

Never has a greater mistake been made in the entire history of the nations. Here you had a people who placed themselves at your feet, who welcomed you as their savior, who wished you to govern them and protect them. In combination with the genius of our countrymen and their local knowledge, you would have transformed the Philippine Islands from a land of despotism, of vicious governmental methods and priestcraft, into an enlightened republic, with America as its guide—a happy and contented people—and that in the short space of a few months, without the sacrifice of a single American life. The means were there, and it only required the magic of a master-hand to guide them, as your ships were guided into Manila Bay.

Who is responsible for the contrast between the picture I have just drawn and that which meets the eye at the present moment with all its ghastly horrors? Wider and wider the separation became with very many aggravating circumstances, until liberty now travels in two parallel lines, very distant from each other.

It is our distinct opinion, and we would fain think it correct, that the President of the United States was misled by the military ideas of Gen. Merritt, as he has been later deceived by those of Gen. Otis. He saw the fatal mistake too late. Gen. Merritt, whose name must ever go down to posterity linked with the memory of the bloodshed and the horrors of this inhuman and unjust war, was recalled. Let us hope the error was one of judgment only.

The rest is a matter of history, of which the American public, otherwise lamentably ignorant of details, possess at least Gen. Otis' version, which, needless to say, is far from being the correct one. The administration defend themselves by saying that they know the truth. The more shame to them that they continue this barbarous and unjust warfare!

You have been deceived from the beginning, and deception is the order of the day. You continue to deceive yourselves by the thought that once the military power is established in the Philippines, the rest is a matter for politicians. Verily you are falling into the pit you have dug for yourselves. Your officials and generals have broken their promises with our countrymen over and over again. Your atrocious cruelties are equalled only by those of Spain.

You take into your confidence the odious reptiles of Spanish priestcraft. You have established a reputation for the historical *Punica Fides*. In the face of the world you emblazon Humanity and Liberty upon your standard, while you cast your political constitution to the winds and attempt to trample down and exterminate a brave people whose only crime is that they are fighting for their liberty. You ask my countrymen to believe in you, to trust you, and you assure them that, if they do so, all will be well. But your action is on a plane with the trick which the vulgar charlatan at a country fair plays upon the unwary with three cards and an empty box.

You will never conquer the Philippine Islands by force alone. How many soldiers in excess of the regular army do you mean to leave in every town, in every province? How many will the climate claim as its victims, apart from those who may fall in actual warfare? What do the American people, who have thousands of acres yet untilled, want with the Philippines? Have you figured up the cost?

The conclusion of the whole matter is this: You were duped at the beginning. You took a wrong step, and you had not sufficient moral courage to retrace it. You must begin by conquering the hearts of the Philippine people. Be absolutely just, and you can lead them with a silken cord where chains of steel will not drag them. We excuse your want of knowledge in the past, for you have had no experience in treating with our people; but retrieve your mistake now, while there is time.

The man, next to Gen. Merritt, who has misled you, and who is responsible for the continuance of this barbarous warfare, is General Otis. Had he allowed the Peace Commission to act independently, a *modus vivendi* would probably have been arrived at. But this question of sovereignty—why, such a transparent farce has never before been flouted before an intelligent people and the world in general. Can you wonder our people mistrust you and your empirical methods? They do not even regard you as being serious—a nation which professes to derive its just power of government from the consent of the governed.

“Lay down your arms,” you say. Did you lay down your arms when you, too, were rebels, and the English under good King George demanded your submission? How in the name of all that is serious do you demand that we shall do what you, being rebels, refused to do?

Therefore, we Filipinos say: “Recall Gen. Otis, give the Peace Commission a free hand, try rather methods of fair dealing, make our countrymen believe that you are sincere, and be sincere and just in your dealings with them. Suspend the order for these rabble volunteers, the scum of your country, whom you propose to send across the sea to die of the effect of the climate, and you will find you can do more in a month than you will do by force in twenty years. Your scheme of military occupation has been a miserable failure. You have gained practically nothing. With General Otis, or without him, you will have to commence at the beginning again. Our forces are manufacturing thousands of cartridges and other improved means to continue the struggle, and it will continue until you are convinced of your error.”

Our friend, Admiral Dewey, will undoubtedly have something to say to your President when he reaches home. He caught the genius of the Philippine people, and if he had been left alone many valuable lives would have been spared and many millions of

treasure saved. Be convinced, the Philippines are for the Filipinos. We are a virile race. We have never assimilated with our former oppressors, and we are not likely to assimilate with you.

Negros and Cebu are wavering in the balance uncertain whether or not to continue under your jurisdiction. We know how all that came to pass and the intrigues in Manila. Your newspaper correspondents know it also. But I am violating the commands of Gen. Otis by letting you into the secret. Meanwhile, I subscribe myself

SEMPER VIGILANS.

Paris, August, 1899.